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ESTHER

TO THE READER

Edition of Greek Text

The NETS version of Esther is based on the full critical edition prepared by Robert Hanhart (*Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum Auctoritate Academiae Scientiarum Gottingensis editum VIII.3: Esther* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966]).

The Two Greek Versions

Esther is one of three books in the Hebrew canon to have survived in two distinct Greek versions. The Göttingen critical edition of Esther prints both Greek texts. The "Septuagint" (Old Greek = OG) version is printed on the top half of the page with the siglum *o´*. The second Greek version is known as the Alpha-text (AT) and is printed on the bottom of the page with the siglum *L*, because at the time of its printing, this Greek version was thought to be Lucianic. It is not known with certainty which of the two Greek versions is the older or if one text is a revision of the other. Recent scholarship has challenged the traditional view that the *o´* text of Esther was the first Greek translation made of the Hebrew and that the AT was a later revision of it. The *o´* text carries a colophon, which, if historically reliable, would allow for three possible dates for the origin of the translation: 114/13 BCE, 78/77 BCE, or 48 BCE. Scholars disagree on which is most likely. Both Greek versions have been translated for NETS. The NRSV translates the *o´* text into English with the title "Esther: The Greek Version Containing the Additional Chapters" and includes it within the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books.

Both the *o´* text and the AT contain six additional chapters that are found only in the Greek textual tradition. These six additional chapters are almost identical in both Greek versions of Esther, indicating that they were not a part of the original Greek text of either, but were inserted later into both versions, probably being copied from one of the Greek versions of Esther to the other.

There is no manuscript evidence that the six additional chapters found in the Greek versions ever existed in Hebrew or Aramaic. Furthermore, their style and syntax indicates that they were composed in Greek, with the possible exception of addition D. Additions B and E are royal memos and exhibit an overworked style that satirizes the pompous and self-serving character of the king.

The Alpha-Text of Esther (Göttingen L)

The Alpha-text (AT) of Esther is a second Greek version of the story preserved in only four manuscripts. It is a significantly shorter telling of the story than both the Hebrew (MT) and the other Greek version (o´), and its versification differs from both. This translation follows the Göttingen versification.

The siglum *L*, indicating Lucianic, was assigned to this text in the nineteenth century because it was preserved in manuscripts containing the Lucianic recension of Reigns (Samuel-Kings). Although it is no longer considered Lucianic by most scholars who have examined it, there is no agreement on its origin, its relationship to the Hebrew Esther, or to the other Greek version. Current theories propose that it is (a) a revision of the o´ text, (b) a second, independently made translation of the MT, (c) a translation of another Hebrew text of Esther of uncertain relationship to the MT, or (d) a midrashic re-write of the Esther story.

Translation Profile of the Greek

Apart from the six additional chapters, the syntax and style of both Greek versions of Esther are similar to other books of the Septuagint that have been translated from the Hebrew. Of the two versions, the *o´* text of Esther follows the Hebrew MT more closely and, when the six additional chapters are excluded, agrees with it semantically in about 87% of its translation units and formally in about 62% of its translation units. In comparison, the AT, which is about 20% shorter than the MT even including the six additional chapters, exhibits about 81% semantic agreement with the MT and about 52% formal agreement. Hence, the AT is the freer translation of the two, if its Hebrew *Vorlage* is presumed to have been sufficiently similar to the MT. The AT is also the more lexically diverse of the two versions, using a greater variety of Greek words to render a given Hebrew word than does the *o´* text.

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Although the *o´* text follows the MT closely in most chapters, it is not an isomorphic translation such that each word of the Hebrew is represented by a word in the Greek, a translation practice that results in Hebraisms that are not idiomatic Greek. Nevertheless, a few Hebraisms can be found, for instance in 6.13 ("you will fall when you fall") where the Greek syntax reflects a literal rendering of the Hebrew infinitive absolute and, for instance, in 8.3 where the Greek verb προστίθημι expresses the Hebrew idea "to do again" or "keep on doing." Elements in the Hebrew that are synonymous or redundant are often expressed by only one element in the Greek. Nouns and proper names are often omitted or replaced with a pronoun (and sometimes vice versa). Explanatory phrases are sometimes added, especially to make God's presence explicit (e.g., 6.13). The *o´* text translates about 80% of the text found in the MT.

The second Greek text of Esther, the AT, or *L* text, is shorter than the *o´* text (and the Hebrew MT) by about 20%. It represents only about half the text found in the MT. More often than not, the AT follows the word order of the MT and agrees with it about as often as does the *o´* text. The primary difference between the AT and the MT is the many small pluses and minuses, though many of these are due to inherent differences between the Hebrew and Greek languages. Most of the significant pluses and minuses in the AT compared to the MT are found in chapters 8–10 and appear to be caused by a deliberate decision (a) to minimize Esther's role while magnifying Mardochaios', (b) to reflect less interest in the origin and celebration of Purim, and (c) to highlight in the AT the role of the Jews (Judeans) as advantageous to the king in the political intrigue of the pagan court with a special interest in the theme of political assassination. Like the *o´* text, the AT is not an isomorphic translation and typically preserves the sense but not the form of the Hebrew idioms involving "face," "hand," "eyes" and "heart."

The current consensus of scholarship denies that one Greek version of Esther is a recension of the other, but the *o´* text and AT are clearly translations of the same story as extant in the MT because they virtually never agree against the MT (though the AT and MT sometimes agree against the *o´* text). Chapters 8–10 of the two Greek versions differ sufficiently to deny a literary dependence between the two and to suggest that both Greek versions were redacted extensively and independently when addition E was introduced into each. Chapter 8 shows the least agreement between the two Greek versions because they share very few of the same syntactic units, but those few that they do share show a high percentage of agreement.

The same six additional chapters found in both Greek versions appear not to have been in the original text of either, with perhaps the exception of addition D interwoven into chapter 5. It is likely that this additional material was added first to one Greek version, whether all at once or over time, and then later copied to the other. Additions A and F clearly function together, being the apocalyptic dream of Mardochaios (A) and its interpretation (F) that frame the events of the Esther story as a fulfillment of restored covenant blessing as predicted in the prophecy against Babylon in Jeremiah 28 (LXX). Additions C and E share sufficient common vocabulary to indicate that E was composed to answer the prayers of Mardochaios and Esther voiced in C, which therefore must have logically, if not chronologically, preceded the composition of E. Moreover, addition C shows influence from the Greek translation of Moyses' intercessory prayer in Deut 9.26 LXX. Although conflicting evidence allows no consensus about which Greek version is the older, there is some evidence that the AT preserves the older form of additions A, B, C, E, and F. This does not necessarily mean that the additions were first introduced into the AT, only that the texts of these additional chapters have experienced fewer changes since being introduced into the AT than they have in the *o´* text. That may be because the *o´* text enjoyed a longer and wider transmission history than the AT, which is extant in only four manuscripts.

The NETS Translation of Esther

The Hebrew MT was the text from which the NRSV English translation was made. Where the Göttingen Greek text agrees with the Hebrew, the NRSV text was allowed to stand in NETS, where acceptable. For the six additional chapters for which there is no extant Hebrew, the Göttingen text was compared to the NRSV English translation of the Greek Esther, which was allowed to stand unless the NRSV violated NETS policy.

Versification

The NETS translations of Esther follow the versification of the Göttingen edition. Numbers in parentheses refer to the parallel text. The six additional chapters are of particular note. Referred to by the letters A–F in the Göttingen edition, and likewise in NETS, they traditionally have been taken out of narrative sequence and numbered as chapters 11–16. Following Jerome's pattern, they were displaced to the end of the book following chapter 10, making narrative nonsense of the material. These six additional chapters are translated in the NETS edition in the position in which they are found in the Greek versions.

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A In the second year when Artaxerxes the Great was king, on the first day of Nisa, Mardochaios the son of Iairos son of Semeias son of Kisaios, from the tribe of Beniamin, saw a dream. 2He was a Judean man dwelling in the city of Susa, a great man, serving in the court of the king. 3Now he was of the group of exiles which Nabouchodonosor, king of Babylon, took captive from Ierousalem with Iechonias, the king of Judea. 4And this was his dream: Look! Shouts and confusion! Thunder and earthquake! Chaos upon the earth! 5Look! Two great dragons came forward, both ready to fight, and a great noise arose from them! 6And at their sound every nation prepared for war, to fight against a nation of righteous people. 7Look! A day of darkness and gloom! Affliction and anguish! Oppression and great chaos upon the earth! 8And the whole righteous nation was in chaos, fearing the evils that threatened themselves, and they were ready to perish. 9Then they cried out to God, and from their cry, as though from a small spring, there came a great river, abundant water; 10light, and the sun rose, and the lowly were exalted and devoured those held in esteem. 11Then when Mardochaios, who had seen this dream and what God had determined to do, awoke, he had it on his heart and sought until nightfall to understand it in every detail.

12 And Mardochaios took his rest in the courtyard with Gabatha and Tharra, the two eunuchs of the king who guarded the courtyard. 13He both overheard their deliberations and inquired into their ambitions, and learned that they were preparing to lay hands on Artaxerxes the king, and he told the king about them. 14Then the king interrogated the two eunuchs, and when they confessed, they were led away. 15And the king wrote these things in the record, and Mardochaios wrote concerning these things. 16And the king ordered Mardochaios to serve in the court and gave to him gifts for these things. 17But Haman son of Hamadathos, a Bougean, was highly esteemed by the king, and he sought to harm Mardochaios and his people because of the two eunuchs of the king.

1 Now it happened after these things in the days of Artaxerxes—this Artaxerxes controlled one hundred twenty-seven lands from India—2in those days when King Artaxerxes was enthroned in the city of Susa, 3in the third year when he was king, he gave a feast for his Friends and for the other nations and for those highly esteemed of the Persians and Medes and for the rulers of the satrapies. 4And after these things, after he had displayed to them the great wealth of his kingdom and the glory of the celebration of his wealth for one hundred eighty days 5and when the days of the wedding feast were completed, the king gave a

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A In the second year when Assyeros the Great was king, on the first day of the month of Adar Nisan (which is Dystros Xanthikos) Mardochaios the son of Iaeiros son of Semeias, son of Kisaios, of the tribe of Beniamin, saw a dream. (2)He was a great man, 2(3)one of the exiles whom Nabouchodonosor, king of Babylon, took captive with Iechonias, the king of Judea. 3(4)And this was his dream: Look! A shout and a cry of confusion! Thunder and earthquake and chaos upon the earth! 4(5)Look! Two dragons! And they came forward, both ready to fight, 5and a noise arose from them! (6)And everything was troubled by the sound of this cry. 6It was a testimony to all the peoples—(7)a day of darkness and gloom (8)and chaos of war! And every nation prepared to fight. (9)And we cried out to the Lord because of the sound of their cry. 7And there came from a small spring abundant water, a great river. 8(10)Light, the sun rose, and the rivers were exalted and swallowed those held in esteem. 9(11)Then, when Mardochaios arose from his sleep, he pondered what the dream meant and what the Mighty One was preparing to do. 10And his dream was hidden in his heart, and at every opportunity he was trying to figure it out. 11Its interpretation would become clear to him on the day (12)on which Mardochaios napped in the courtyard of the king with Astaos and Thedeutes, the two eunuchs of the king. 12(13)And he overheard their words and their schemes as they were plotting to assault Assyeros the king to kill him.

13 So after thinking about it, Mardochaios reported about them. 14Then the king questioned the two eunuchs and found Mardochaios' words true, and when the eunuchs confessed, they were led away. 15So Assyeros the king wrote about these things, and Mardochaios was written about in the book of the king so that these things would be remembered. 16And the king commanded concerning Mardochaios that he serve in the court of the king and conspicuously guard every door. 17And he assigned to him for these things (17)Haman son of Hamadathos, a Macedonian in the presence of the king. 18And Haman was seeking to harm Mardochaios and all his people because of what he had said to the king concerning the eunuchs, because they had been executed.

1 Now it happened after these things in the days of Assyeros the great king, one hundred twenty-seven lands from India to Ethiopia were subjected to him. 2While Assyeros was sitting upon the throne of his kingdom, 3then the king gave a wine party for the rulers of the court of the Persians and Medes and the rulers of the lands before him—4that the wealth of the king's glory and the honor of which he boasted be put on display for one hundred and eighty days, 5until the days were completed, during which the king gave a wine party for all those found in the city of Susa—from great to small—for seven days inside the king's

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wine party for the nations present in the city, for six days, in the courtyard of the house of the king. 6It had been decorated with linen and cotton curtains hung on cords of linen and purple attached to gold and silver blocks on pillars of marble and other stones. There were couches of gold and silver on a mosaic pavement of emerald, mother-of-pearl and marble. There were gossamer throws in many colors embroidered with roses round about. 7The goblets were made of gold and silver, and a miniature cup made of ruby was on display that was worth thirty thousand talents. The wine was abundant and sweet, which the king himself drank. 8Now this wine party was not by established law, but so the king wanted it, and he ordered his stewards to do as he and his men wanted.

9 And Astin the queen gave a wine party for the women in the royal quarters where King Artaxerxes was.

10 Now on the seventh day, when he was feeling merry, the king told Haman and Bazan and Tharra and Boraze and Zatholtha and Abataza and Tharaba, the seven eunuchs who attended King Artaxerxes, 11to bring the queen to him in order to proclaim her queen and to place the diadem on her and to show her to the rulers and her beauty to the peoples, because she was beautiful. 12But Astin the queen did not obey him to come with the eunuchs. The king was angry, and he was enraged! 13Then he said to his Friends, "This is how Astin spoke, therefore give your ruling and judgment on this." 14So Arkesaios, Sarsathaios and Malesear, the rulers of the Persians and Medes who were close to the king and seated first by the king, came to him. 15And they reported to him what, according to law, must be done with Astin the queen, because she had not done the things ordered by the king through the eunuchs. 16Then Mouchaios said to the king and the rulers, "Astin the queen has wronged not only the king, but also all the rulers and governors of the king." 17(For he had reported to them the words of the queen and how she defied the king.) "Therefore, just as she defied King Artaxerxes, 18so this very day the other princesses of the rulers of the Persians and Medes, when they hear what was said to the king by her, will similarly dare to dishonor their husbands. 19Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal order, and let it be written according to the laws of the Medes and Persians, and let it not be applied differently, neither let the queen any longer come to him, and let the king give her royal position to a woman better than she. 20Let the law declared by the king be heard, whatever law he enacts in his kingdom. And thus all women shall bestow honor on their own husbands, from the poor to the rich." 21This word pleased the king and the rulers, and the king did as Mouchaios said. 22He sent word throughout the whole kingdom, to every land in its own language so that they had fear in their homes.

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courtyard, celebrating his deliverance. 6And there were tapestries of linen and cotton with lavender and scarlet embroidered in flowers and an awning hung by linen and purple cords on silver blocks and pillars of marble and gilded with gold. And there were couches of gold on an emerald pavement and roses round about.

7 And the golden goblets were each different, and the wine was royal, which the king drinks. 8And this wine party was according to law, for so the king had ordered that the will of the men be done.

9 And Ouastin the queen gave a great reception for all the women in the court of the king.

10 Now it happened on the seventh day, when the king was feeling good from the wine, the king told his servants 11to bring Ouastin the queen into the assembled banquet, in her royal diadem, before his army. 12And Ouastin did not want to do the will of the king through the hand of the eunuchs. Now when the king heard that Ouastin denied his will, he was very angry! Rage burned within him! 13Then the king asked all the wise men who knew law and justice what to do with the queen, because she had not been willing to do the will of the king. 14And the rulers of the Persians and Medes and those who see the face of the king and those seated among royalty came to him. 16And Bougaios advised him, saying, "Ouastin the queen has wronged not only the king, but also the rulers of the Persians and Medes, and to all the peoples her affront has gone out, because she ignored the ordinance of the king. 18(19)If, therefore, it pleases our lord and is acceptable to his thinking, let it be written to all the lands and to all the nations, and make it known that Ouastin rejected the word of the king. And let her royal position be given to another, one better than she. 20And let it be seen that she is obeying the voice of the king, and he will do good for all the kingdoms. And all wives will give honor and glory to their husbands from the poor to the rich." 21This word was good in the heart of the king, and he acted readily according to this advice.

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2 After these things, the king got over his anger, and he no longer remembered Astin, recalling what she[a] had said and how he condemned her. 2Then the king's ministers said, "Let pure girls be sought for the king, beautiful in appearance. 3And the king shall appoint officers in all the lands of his kingdom and let them select maidenly girls, beautiful in appearance, into Susa the city, into the harem, and let them be entrusted to the king's eunuch, the guard of the women; then let cosmetics and other care be given. 4And whichever woman is pleasing to the king will be queen instead of Astin." The advice pleased the king, and he did so.

5 Now there was a Judean man in Susa the city, and his name was Mardochaios the son of Iairos son of Semeias son of Kisaios, from the tribe of Beniamin, 6who was an exile from Ierousalem, which Nabouchodonosor, king of Babylon, had taken captive. 7And this man had a foster child, a daughter of Aminadab, his father's brother, and her name was Esther. And when her parents died, he trained her for himself as a wife. And the girl was beautiful in appearance. 8So when the king's ordinance was heard, many girls were gathered into Susa the city under the charge of Gai. Esther was also taken to Gai, the guard of the women. 9The girl pleased him and found his favor, and he hastened to provide her with cosmetics and her portion of food and with seven girls assigned to her from the palace, and he provided well for her and her attendants in the harem. 10Esther did not reveal her race or her ancestry, for Mardochaios had commanded her not to tell. 11Each day Mardochaios walked around in front of the harem court, to learn how Esther would fare.

12 Now time for a girl to go in to the king was when she had completed twelve months, for the days of treatment were like this: six months being rubbed with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and cosmetics for the women. 13And then she would go in to the king. And to whomever he spoke he would give her to go with him from the harem to the royal quarters. 14In the evening she would go in; then toward day she would depart into the second harem of which Gai, the king's eunuch, was the guard of the women. And she would not go in to the king again, unless she was summoned by name.

15 When the time was completed for Esther the daughter of Aminadab, brother of Mardochaios's father, to go in to the king, she turned down nothing of the things the king's eunuch, the guard of the women, commanded. For Esther was favored by all who saw her. 16Esther went in to Artaxerxes the king in the twelfth month, which is Adar, in the seventh year of his reign. 17And the king fell in love with Esther, and she found favor beyond all the virgins; so he set the queen's diadem on her. 18Then the king gave a wine party for all his Friends and forces for seven days. He celebrated Esther's wedding feast and [b]gave rest to[b] those under his rule.

[a]Or *he* [b]Or *canceled debts of*

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2 And so was established the tradition about Ouastin and what she did to Assyeros the king. 2Then those serving the king said, "Let us seek virgins beautiful in appearance, (3)and let them be given to be placed under the charge of Gogaios the eunuch, the guard of the women. 4And whichever girl is pleasing to the king will be appointed to replace Ouastin." And they readily acted accordingly.

5 Now there was a Judean man in Susa the city, whose name was Mardochaios son of Iaeiros son of Semeias son of Kisaios, of the tribe of Beniamin. 7And he was faithfully bringing up Esther, a daughter of the brother of his father. And the child was very beautiful in appearance and lovely to see. 8And the girl was taken into the house of the king. And Bougaios, the eunuch who guarded, saw the girl, (9)and she was more pleasing to him than all the women. 9And Esther found his personal favor and compassion. So he hastened to take charge of her and granted to her, beyond the seven young women, her own attendants. And when Esther was led in to the king, she was very pleasing to him.

14 When nightfall came, she was led in, and in the early morning she was dismissed. 17And as the king considered all the virgins, Esther was shown to be the most splendid. And she found his personal favor and compassion, and he placed the royal diadem upon her head. 18And so the king held a splendid wedding feast for Esther and [a]gave rest to[a] all the provinces.

[a]Or *canceled debts of*

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19 And Mardochaios was serving in the court. 20But Esther did not reveal her ancestry. For so Mardochaios had commanded her: to fear God and to do his ordinances, just as when she was with him. So Esther did not change her way of life.

21 The two eunuchs who were the king's chief bodyguards were irritated because Mardochaios was promoted, and they sought to kill Artaxerxes the king. 22But the matter became known to Mardochaios, and he alerted Esther, and she explained to the king the details of the plot. 23So the king interrogated the two eunuchs and hanged[a] them. Then the king ordered to make an entry as a memorial in the royal archive in commendation of Mardochaios's loyalty.

3 After these things King Artaxerxes honored Haman son of Hamadathos, a Bougean, and exalted him and set him above all his Friends. 2And all who were in the court would do obeisance to him, for the king had commanded them to do so. But Mardochaios would not do obeisance to him. 3Then those in the court of the king spoke to Mardochaios, "Mardochaios, why do you disobey what the king says?" 4Day after day they spoke to him, and he would not listen to them. So they revealed to Haman that Mardochaios was opposing the commands of the king, and Mardochaios revealed to them that he was a Judean. 5When Haman learned that Mardochaios would not do obeisance to him, he was very angry. 6And so he planned to destroy all the Judeans under the rule of Artaxerxes.

7 He made a decision in the twelfth year of Artaxerxes' reign and cast lots day-by-day and month-by-month so that the race of Mardochaios might perish on one day. The lot fell on the fourteenth of the month that is Adar.

8 Then he spoke to King Artaxerxes, saying, "There is a certain nation scattered among the nations throughout all your kingdom; their laws are different from all the nations, and they disobey the king's laws so that it is not expedient for the king to tolerate them. 9If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued to destroy them, and I will pay into the king's treasury ten thousand talents of silver." 10And the king took his signet ring and put it in[b] the hand of Haman to seal what had been written against the Judeans. 11The king said to Haman, "Keep the silver, but treat the nation as you wish."

12 Then the king's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and they wrote as Haman commanded to the governors and to the rulers of every land—from India to Ethiopia—to one hundred twenty-seven lands and to the rulers of the nations in their own language in the name of Artaxerxes the king. 13It was sent by couriers throughout Artaxerxes' empire, to destroy the race of the Judeans in one day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to seize their property.

[a]Or *hung* [b]Or *on*

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3 Now it happened after these things that King Assyeros promoted Haman son of Hamadathos, a Bougean, and advanced him and set his throne above those of his Friends so that all would bend over and bow themselves on the ground before him. 2Therefore, although everyone would do obeisance to him in accord with the king's ordinance, Mardochaios would not do obeisance before him. 3And the servants of the king saw that Mardochaios was not doing obeisance before Haman, and the servants of the king said to Mardochaios, "Why do you disobey the king and not do obeisance before Haman?" 4So he told them that he was a Judean. And they informed Haman about him. 5Now when Haman heard, he was provoked to jealousy against Mardochaios, and rage burned within him. So he was seeking to destroy Mardochaios and all his people on one day. 6Since Haman was provoked and all his rage was stirred up, he turned red, driving him from his sight. And with a malicious heart, he kept speaking evil to the king about Israel, 8saying, "There is a people scattered throughout all the kingdoms, a people of war and insubordinate, who have different laws from your laws, O King. They do not pay heed though they are known among all nations because they are evil, and they set aside your commands to undermine your glory. 9Therefore, if it pleases the king and this judgment is good in his heart, let this nation be given to me for destruction, and I will pay into the treasury ten thousand talents of silver." 11So the king said to him, "Keep the silver, but treat the nation as it pleases you." 10So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman saying, "Write to all the lands, and seal it with the signet ring of the king. For there is none who will reject the seal."

7 So Haman went to his gods to learn the day of their death and cast lots for the thirteenth day of the month of Adar Nisan to murder all the Judeans, from male to female, and to take their young children as plunder. 13And he hurried and delivered it into the hands of swift horsemen.

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B This is a copy of the letter:
"The Great King Artaxerxes writes as follows to the rulers of the one hundred twenty-seven lands from India to Ethiopia and to the officials under them:

2 "Being the ruler of many nations and master of the whole world, I have determined (not high-mindedly with presumption of authority but always acting in moderation and with kindness) to secure lasting tranquility in the lives of my subjects and, in order to make my kingdom peaceable and open to travel throughout all its extent, to restore the peace desired by all people.

3 "When I asked my counselors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who excels among us in sound judgment and is distinguished for his unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity and has attained the second place in the kingdom—4pointed out to us that among all the tribes in the world there is scattered a certain hostile people, who have laws contrary to those of every nation and continually disregard the ordinances of kings so that the joint administration of the kingdom that we honorably intend cannot be achieved. 5Therefore, whereas we understand that, since this nation stands constantly all alone in opposition to all humanity, perversely following an estranging manner of life due to their laws and since it is ill-disposed to our interests, doing the worst harm and in order that our kingdom may not attain stability.

6 "We therefore have ordered that you utterly destroy those indicated to you in the letters written by Haman, who is in charge of the affairs of state and is our second Father—including women and children—by the daggers of their enemies, without any compassion and restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, of this present year, 7so that those who have long been hostile and so remain, when they in one day have gone down to Hades by force, may in the time hereafter render the matters of state completely tranquil and untroubled for us."

3 14Copies of the letters were posted in every land, and it was ordered all the nations to be ready for this day. 15The matter proceeded quickly even to Susa. While the king and Haman were sitting down to drink, the city was being thrown into confusion.

4 Now when Mardochaios learned the outcome, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes, and as he rushed through the square of the city, he cried out with a loud voice, "An innocent nation is being destroyed!" 2He went up to the king's gate and stood there, for it was not permitted him to enter the courtyard clothed with sackcloth and ashes. 3And in every land, wherever the letters were posted, there was crying and wailing and great mourning among the Judeans; they put sackcloth and ashes on themselves. 4The queen's attendants and eunuchs came in and told her, and she was troubled when she heard what had happened.

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(B) 14(1) And he subjoined the following letter:
"The Great King Assyeros writes as follows to the rulers and satraps of the one hundred and twenty and seven lands from India to Ethiopia:

15(2) "Being the ruler of many nations and master of the whole world, I have determined (not high-mindedly with presumption of authority but always acting in moderation and with kindness) to secure lasting tranquility in the lives of my subjects and, making my kingdom peaceable and open to travel to its full extent, to restore the peace desired by all people.

16(3)"When I was asking my counselors how this might be accomplished, Haman—who has excelled among us in sound judgment, by unchanging goodwill and steadfast fidelity having attained the second place in the kingdom—(4) pointed out to us that there is scattered a certain hostile people, resident among all the tribes in the world who, on the one hand, have laws in opposition to those of every nation and, on the other, continually disregard the command of kings so that the kingdom can never attain stability. 17(5)Therefore, whereas we understand that, since the nation stands all alone in its way of life which is contrary to every one of humanity on account of an estranging way of life due to their laws and since it is ill-disposed to our commands, it perpetually does the worst harm, in order that we may never be established in the sole-rule directed by us.

18(6) "We therefore have ordered to you that you destroy one and all of those indicated to you in the letters written by Haman, who is in charge of the affairs of state and is our second Father—women and children included—by the daggers of their enemies, without any compassion or restraint, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month (this is the month of Adar, which is Dystros), in order to eliminate all the Judeans and to take their children as plunder (7)in order that those who have long been hostile and so remain, when they in one day have together gone down to Hades, may in the time hereafter be in a state of tranquility and not ever again furnish us with matters for concern."

(3) 19(15)And in Susa this decree was posted.

4 Now Mardochaios learned everything that had happened, and the city of Susa was in turmoil because of the things that had taken place. For all the Judeans there was great and bitter sorrow in the whole city. 2Now Mardochaios went to his home, folded up his clothes and put on sackcloth. After he had sprinkled ashes on himself, he went out as far as the outer courtyard and stood there, for he could not enter the royal precincts in sackcloth. 3(4)So he called one eunuch and sent him to Esther. And the queen said, "Take off his sackcloth, and bring him in." 4But he did not want to. (8)Instead he said, "Thus you will say to her,

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She sent someone[a] to clothe Mardochaios and to take off his sackcloth, but he was not persuaded. 5Then Esther called for Hachrathaios, her eunuch who attended her, and sent him to learn for her from Mardochaios the facts.

7 So Mardochaios told him what had happened, and the promise that Haman had promised to the king of ten thousand talents into the treasury so that he could destroy the Judeans. 8He also gave him the copy that had been posted in Susa to destroy them, to show to Esther, and told him to command her to go and entreat the king and to beg him on behalf of her people: "Remember your humble days when you were brought up by my hand, for Haman, the second to the king, has spoken against us to put us to death. Call upon the Lord, and speak to the king about us, and deliver us from death!"

9 So Hachrathaios went in and told her all these things. 10Then Esther said to Hachrathaios, "Go to Mardochaios, and say, 11'All the nations of the empire know that every man or woman who shall go to the king inside the inner court uninvited—there is no deliverance for him. Only if the king holds out the golden rod to someone, will that person be safe. And I myself have not been called to go to the king for these thirty days.' "

12 So Hachrathaios reported to Mardochaios everything Esther had said. 13Mardochaios said to Hachrathaios, "Go, and say to her, 'Esther, do not say to yourself that you alone of all the Judeans in the empire will be safe. 14Because even if you keep silent at this time, from elsewhere help and protection will come to the Judeans, but you and your father's household will perish. And who knows if for this time you were made queen?' " 15Then Esther sent the messenger who had come to her back to Mardochaios, saying, 16"Go, gather the Judeans that are in Susa, and fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night and day. I and my attendants will also abstain from food. And then I will go to the king, though it is against the law, even if it be that I perish." 17And Mardochaios went and did what Esther had commanded him.

C Then he petitioned the Lord, remembering all the works of the Lord.

2 And he said, "Lord, Lord, King of all powers, for the universe is subject to your authority, and there is no one who can oppose you when it is your will to save Israel, 3because you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing in what is under heaven. 4You are Lord of all, and there is no one who can withstand you, the Lord. 5You know all things; you know, O Lord, that it was not in in-solence nor pride nor for any love of glory that I did this, namely, to refuse to do obeisance to this prideful Haman, 6for I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet for Israel's safety! 7But I did this so that I might not set human glory above

[a]Lacking in Gk

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'Do not turn away from going to the king and flattering his person for the sake of me and my people, remembering your humble days when you were being brought up by my hand, because Haman, who is the second in command, has spoken to the king against us to put us to death. 5Therefore call upon God, and speak about us to the king, and deliver us from death!' "

6(9) So he made known to her the tribulation of Israel. 7(10)And she sent to him saying as follows, (11)"You know as well as anyone that whoever goes to the king uninvited, he to whom he does not hold out his golden scepter will be subject to death. 8And I have not been called to him for thirty days. So how can I go now, not being invited?"

9(13) So Mardochaios sent to her and said to her, (14)"If you ignore your nation and do not help them, then surely God will be to them a helper and deliverance, but you and your father's household will perish. 10And who knows if for this time you were made queen?" 11(15)Then the queen sent saying, (16)"Proclaim a religious service, and petition God earnestly, and I and my girls will do likewise. And I will go to the king uninvited, even if it be necessary that I die." 12(17)And Mardochaios did so.

(C) Then he petitioned the Lord, remembering his works.

(2) And he said,13 "Master Almighty, under whose authority are all things and there is no one who can resist you when it is your will to save the house of Israel, (3)because you have made heaven and earth and every wonderful thing in what is under heaven, (4)and you rule everything. 14(5)For you know all things and the race of Israel you know. 15It was not in insolence nor for any love of glory that I did not bow down to this uncircumcised Haman, (6)since I would have been willing to kiss the soles of his feet for the sake of Israel, (7)but I did this so that I might not set anyone above your glory, Master, and not do obeisance to anyone but you, the True One, and I will not do it even under duress. 16(8)And now, O Lord, you who

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divine glory, and I will not do obeisance to anyone but you, my Lord, and I will not do these things in pride. 8And now, O Lord God, King, God of Abraam, spare your people, for they are looking to ruin us, and they desired to destroy the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. 9Do not neglect your portion, which you redeemed for yourself out of the land of Egypt. 10Hear my petition, and have mercy upon your allotment; turn our mourning into feasting, that we may live and sing hymns to your name, O Lord; do not silence the mouth of those who praise you."

11 And all Israel cried out from their strength, because their death was before their eyes.

12 Then Esther the queen fled to the Lord, seized with the agony of death. 13Taking off the garments of her glory, she put on the garments of distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every part that she loved to adorn she covered with her tangled[a] hair. 14Then she petitioned the Lord, God of Israel, and said: "O my Lord, you alone are our king; help me, I who am alone and have no helper except you, 15because my danger is in my hand. 16I have heard from my birth in the tribe of my family that you, O Lord, took Israel out of all the nations and our fathers from among all their forebears, to be an everlasting inheritance, and you did for them all that you said. 17And now we have sinned before you, and you have delivered us into the hand of our enemies, 18because we honored their gods. You are righteous, O Lord! 19And now they were not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery, but they have [b]put their hands into the hands of their idols[b], 20to annul the stipulation of your mouth and to destroy your inheritance and to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to extinguish the glory of your house and your altar, 21to open the mouth of the nations for the mighty deeds of vain things, and that a mortal king be admired forever.

22 "O Lord, do not surrender your scepter to those who don't exist, and do not let them laugh at our downfall, but turn their plan against them, and make a public example of him who began this against us. 23Remember, O Lord; make yourself known in a time of our affliction, and embolden me, O King of the gods and Master of all dominion! 24Put eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion, and turn his heart to hate the one who fights against us so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. 25But save us by your hand, and help me, who am alone and have no one except you, O Lord. You have knowledge of everything, 26and you know that I hate the glory of the lawless and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised and of any foreigner. 27You know my predicament—that I abhor the sign of my proud

[a]Or *braided* [b]Possibly *covenanted with their idols*

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covenanted with Abraam, spare your people, because they have advanced to ruin us, and they desire to re-move and take away the inheritance that has been yours from the beginning. (9)Do not neglect your portion, which you redeemed out of the land of Egypt. 17(10)Hear our petition, and have mercy upon your inheritance; turn our mourning into re-joicing, that we may live and sing hymns to you; do not silence the mouth of those who sing hymns to you."

18(12) Then Esther the queen fled to the Lord, seized with the agony of death. (13)She took off the garments of glory from herself and every sign of her splendor, and she put on distress and mourning, and instead of costly perfumes she covered her head with ashes and dung, and she utterly humbled her body; every sign of her beauty and adornment she covered humbly with her lovely hair. 19(14)Then she petitioned the Lord and said: "O Lord, King, you alone are a helper; help me, I who am humble and have no helper apart from you, (15)because my danger is in my hand. 20(16)Now I have heard from the book of my heritage that you redeemed Israel out of all the nations and their fathers from among their forebears, appointing Israel over them to be an everlasting inheritance. And you did for them what you said to them and provided whatever they asked. 21(17)We have sinned before you, and you delivered us into the hand of our enemies (18)if we honored their gods. 22You are righteous, O Lord! (19)And now they were not satisfied that we are in bitter slavery, but they have [a]put their hands into the hands of their idols[a], (20)to annul the stipulation of your mouth to destroy your inheritance and to stop the mouths of those who praise you and to extinguish the glory of your house and your altar, (21)and to open the mouths of enemies for the mighty deeds of vain things, and that a mortal king be admired forever.

23(22) "O Lord, do not ever surrender your scepter to enemies who hate you, and may they not rejoice at our downfall; turn their plans against them, and make a public example of him who began this evil against us. 24(23)Be manifest to us, O Lord; make yourself known to us in a time of our affliction, and do not break us. 25(24)Put eloquent speech in my mouth, and give favor to my words before the king, and change his heart to hate the one who fights against us so that there may be an end of him and those who agree with him. (25)But save us by your strong hand, and help me, because you have knowledge of everything, (26)and you know that I abhor the bed of the uncircumcised one and hate the glory of the lawless one and of any alien. 26(27)You, O Lord, know my predicament—that I abhor the sign of proud posi-

[a]Possibly *covenanted with their idols*

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position that is upon my head on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a menstrual cloth, and I do not wear it on the days when I am in private. 28And your slave has not eaten at Haman's table, and I have not honored the king's banquet nor drunk the wine of libations. 29Your slave has not rejoiced since the day of my change until now, except in you, O Lord, God of Abraam. 30O God who has power over all things, hear the voice of those who despair, and save us from the hand of evildoers. And save me from my fear!"

D And it happened on the third day, as she ceased praying, she took off the garments of service and put on her glory. 2Then, when she had become majestic, after calling upon the all-seeing God and savior, she took along two of her attendants; 3on one she leaned gently for support, 4while the other followed, holding her train. 5She was radiant with the full flush of her beauty, and her face looked happy as if she were cheerful, but her heart was in anguish from fear. 6When she had gone through all the doors, she stood before the king. He was seated on the throne of his kingdom, clothed in the full array of his splendor, all covered with gold and precious stones. And he was most terrifying.

7 And when he raised his face inflamed with glory, he gazed at her in the full flush of anger. The queen staggered, her color turned pale from faintness, and she collapsed on the head of the attendant who went before her. 8Then God changed the spirit of the king to gentleness, and alarmed, he jumped from his throne and took her in his arms until she was quieted. He kept comforting her with soothing words 9and said to her, "What is it, Esther? I am your brother. Take heart! 10You shall not die, for our ordinance is only for the common person. 11Come here."

12 Then he lifted the golden rod and placed it on her neck; he welcomed her and said, "Speak to me." 13She said to him, "I saw you, Lord, like a divine angel, and my heart was shaken from fear of your glory. 14For you are marvelous, lord, and your face is full of grace." 15And while she was speaking, she fell from faintness. 16Then the king and all his servants were troubled, and he reassured her.

5 3And the king said to her, "What do you want, Esther? What is your request? Even up to half of my kingdom, and it shall be yours." 4Then Esther said, "Today is my special day. If, therefore, it pleases the king, let both him and Haman come to the dinner that I will prepare today." 5Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly so that we may do what Esther has said." So both came to the dinner that Esther had spoken about. 6During the drinking, the king said to Esther, "What is it, Queen Esther? And it shall be, whatever you ask." 7Then she said, "This is my petition and request: 8If I have found favor before the king, let the king

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tion that is upon my head, and I do not wear it except on days when I appear in public. I abhor it like a cloth of a woman that sits apart. 27(28)And your slave has not eaten with them at their table, 28and I have not honored the king's banquets nor drunk the wine of libation. Your slave has not rejoiced since the day of my change, except in you, Master. 29(30)And now, you who have power over all things, hear the voice of those who despair, and save us from the hand of those who do evil against us. And take me, Lord, out of the grip of my fear!"

5 (D.1)And it happened on the third day, as Esther ceased praying, she took off the garments of service and put on the garments of glory. 2Then, when she had become majestic, and after calling upon the all-knowing One and savior God, she took along with her two attendants; (3)on one she leaned gently for support, (4)while the other followed, holding up her train. 3(5)She was radiant with the full flush of her beauty, and her face looked as if she were cheerful, but her heart was in anguish. 4(6)When she had gone through the doors, she stood before the king. And the king was seated on the throne of his kingdom, clothed in the full array of splendor, all covered with gold and precious stones upon him. And he was most terrifying.

5(7) And when he raised his face inflamed with glory, he gazed right at her like a bull in the full flush of his anger. 6The queen was terrified, and her face turned pale from faintness, and she stooped on the head of the attendant who went before her. 7(8)Then God changed the spirit of the king and turned his anger to gentleness, 8and alarmed, the king jumped down from his throne and took her in his arms. He comforted her, (9)and said, "What is it, Esther? I am your brother. 9Take heart! (10)You shall not die, for our act is only for the common person. (11)The threat is not against you. Look, the scepter is in your hand."

10(12) Then he lifted the scepter and placed it on her neck. He welcomed her and said, "Speak to me!" 11(13)She said to him, "I saw you like a divine angel, and my heart melted from the glory of your rage, Lord." 12(14)And upon her face was a measure of sweat. (16)Then the king and all his servants were troubled, and they reassured her.

5 13(3)And the king said, "What is it, Esther? Tell me, and I will do it for you—up to half of my kingdom." 14(4)Then Esther said, "Tomorrow is a special day for me. If, therefore, it pleases the king, you and Haman, your Friend, come to a wine party that I will prepare tomorrow." 15(5)Then the king said, "Bring Haman quickly so that we may do what Esther has said." 16So both came to the dinner that Esther made, a sumptuous meal. 17(6)So the king said to Esther "O Queen, what is your will? Ask up to half my kingdom, and it shall be yours, whatever you ask." 18(7)Then Esther said, "This is my petition and my request: (8)If I have

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and Haman come again tomorrow to the dinner that I will prepare for them, and tomorrow I will do these same things."

9 So Haman went out from the king very happy and rejoicing. But when Haman saw Mardochaios the Judean in the courtyard, he became very angry. 10So he went home and called his friends and Zosara his wife, 11and he announced to them his riches and the glory that the king had bestowed on him and how he had made him to be first and to be leader of the kingdom. 12Haman said, "The Queen has not summoned with the king anyone but me to the dinner. Tomorrow also I have been invited. 13Yet all this does not please me when I see Mardochaios the Judean in the courtyard." 14Then his wife Zosara and his friends said to him, "Let a pole fifty cubits[a] high be cut for you, and early in the morning speak to the king and have Mardochaios hanged[b] on it; then you, go to the dinner with the king, and celebrate." This advice pleased Haman, and he had the pole prepared.

6 But the Lord kept sleep from the king that night, and he told his teacher to bring the written daily annals, to read to him. 2And he found the entries written concerning Mardochaios, how he informed the king about two of the king's eunuchs, while they were on guard and sought to lay hands on Artaxerxes. 3Then the king said, "What honor or distinction have we bestowed on Mardochaios?" The king's servants said, "You have done nothing for him." 4While the king was inquiring about Mardochaios' goodwill—Look! Haman was in the courtyard! The king said, "Who is in the courtyard?" Now Haman had just entered to speak to the king to hang Mardochaios on the pole that he had prepared for him. 5So the king's servants said, "Look! Haman is standing in the courtyard." And the king said, "Call him." 6So the king said to Haman, "What should I do for the person whom I want to extol?" And Haman said to himself, "Whom would the king want to extol if not me?" 7So he replied to the king, "For the person whom the king wants to extol, 8let the king's servants bring a fine linen robe, which the king wears, and a horse upon which the king rides. 9And let him give to him one of the king's most noble Friends, and let him robe the person whom the king loves, and let him mount him on the horse and proclaim through the square of the city, saying: 'So shall it be for every person whom the king extols.' " 10Then the king said to Haman, "You have spoken well. So do to Mardochaios the Judean who serves in the court. And let not a word of what you have said be transgressed." 11So Haman took the robe and the horse and robed Mar-

[a]I.e. *over seventy feet* [b]Or *hung*

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found favor before you, O King, and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and to do my request, let the king and Haman come to the dinner that I will prepare for them again tomorrow. For again tomorrow I will do likewise." 19So the king said, "Do as you want."

20(9) And it was reported to Haman likewise, and he marveled. And the king departed and retired. 21(10)So Haman went into his home and gathered together his friends, his sons and Zosara his wife. (12)And he boasted saying how the queen had invited no one on her special day "except the king and me only. Tomorrow also I have been invited. 22(13)Yet this alone distresses me: whenever I see Mardochaios the Judean in the court of the king, and he does not bow down to me." 23(14)Then his wife Zosara said to him, "He is from the race of the Judeans. Since the king has allowed you to destroy the Judeans and the gods have given you a day of destruction to take revenge on them, let a pole fifty cubits[a] high be cut for you and be set up, and hang him on the pole. And early in the morning you shall speak to the king about him. And now go; rejoice with the king." 24This pleased Haman, and he did so.

6 But the Mighty One kept sleep from the king that night, and he stayed awake. 2So the readers were called, and the court record was read to him. 3(2)And there was the record of the eunuchs and what good deed Mardochaios had done for the king. 4And the king thought seriously on that matter, saying, "Mardochaios is a loyal man for protecting my life, for he has kept me alive even until now, and I am sitting on my throne today and have done nothing for him. I have not done right by him." 5(3)So the king said to his servants, "What should we do for Mardochaios, the savior in these matters?" And after they thought about it, the young men were envious of him, for fear of Haman lay in their bowels. 6And the king understood. And morning came. (4)The king asked, "Who is outside?" And it was Haman. 7Now Haman had come early to speak to the king so that he might hang Mardochaios. 8(5)And the king said to bring him in. 9(6)So as he entered, the king said to him, "What should we do for the man who honors the king, whom the king wishes to extol?" 10So Haman reasoned, saying, "Whom would the king wish to extol if not me?" 11(7)So Haman replied, "For the person whom the king wishes to extol, (8)let a royal robe be brought, and a royal horse upon which the king rides. (9)And let one of the king's most noble Friends take these things and clothe him, and let him mount him on the horse and go around the city before him proclaiming, 'Thus shall be done for the one who honors the king, whom the king wishes to extol.' " 12(10)So the king said to Haman, "Run quickly, and take the horse and robe as you have said, and do so to

[a]Or *over seventy feet*

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dochaios and mounted him on the horse and went through the square of the city and proclaimed, saying, "So shall it be for every man whom the king wants to extol." 12Then Mardochaios returned to the court, but Haman returned home distressed, with his head covered. 13Haman explained what had happened to him to Zosara his wife and to his friends. His friends and his wife said to him, "If Mardochaios is of the race of the Judeans, you have begun to be humiliated before him; you will fall when you fall. You will never be able to ward him off, because a living god is with him."

14 While they were still speaking, the king's eunuchs arrived hurrying Haman off to the wine party that Esther had prepared.

7 So the king and Haman went in to drink with the queen. 2And the king said to Esther on the second day as they were drinking, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your petition and what is your request? Let it be yours, up to the half of my kingdom." 3Then she answered and said, "If I have found favor with the king, let my life be given at my petition, and my people at my request. 4For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be booty and to be enslaved—we and our children as male and female slaves—and I kept silent. For the slanderer is not worthy of the court of the king." 5Then the king said, "Who is this who dared to do this deed?" 6So Esther said, "A man who is an enemy! Haman is this wicked one!" Then Haman was terrified because of the king and the queen.

7 The king rose from the banquet and went into the garden, but Haman was begging the queen, for he saw himself in deep trouble. 8Then the king returned from the garden. Now Haman had fallen on the couch, entreating the queen. And

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Mardochaios the Judean who sits in the gateway. And let not your word transgressed."

13 Now when Haman realized that it was not he himself who would be extolled, but that it was Mardochaios, his heart was utterly broken, and his spirit became feeble.

14(11) And Haman took the robe and the horse, showing reverence to Mardochaios even on the very same day on which he intended to impale him. 15And he said to Mardochaios, "Tear off the sackcloth." 16And Mardochaios was distressed as one dying, and with anguish he took off the sackcloth and put on the garments of glory. 17And Mardochaios thought he saw a sign, and his heart was toward the Lord, and he was mystified in silent fear. 18And Haman hastened to put him on horseback. 19And Haman led the horse outside and went before him proclaiming, "Thus shall it be done for the man who honors the king, whom the king wishes to extol." 20(12)And so Haman went to his place downhearted, and Mardochaios went to his home. 21(13)Haman explained to his wife everything that had happened to him. 22His wife and his wise men said, "Ever since you spoke evil about him, evil things have been coming to you; be quiet, because God is among them."

23(14) While they were still speaking, someone arrived hurrying him to the wine party. And so he was cheered up, and when he had covered the distance, he reclined with them on time.

7 (2)As the drinking advanced, the king said to Esther, "What is the danger, and what is your petition? Up to the half of my kingdom!" 2Esther struggled with her reply, because the adversary was before her eyes, and God gave her courage as she called upon him. 3And Esther said, "If it pleases the king and the decision is good in his heart, let my people be given for my petition, and my nation for my life. 4For I and my people have been sold into slavery, and their young children as booty. But I did not want to tell you, lest I trouble my lord. For the man who did evil against us has changed his manner." 5Then the king became angry and said, "Who is this who dared to humiliate the sign of my rule so as to disregard fear of you?" 6When the queen saw that it seemed a grave offense to the king and that he hated evil, she said, "Do not be angry, lord, for it is enough that I have found your conciliation. Enjoy your meal, O King, and tomorrow I will do according to your word."

7 But the king swore that she must tell him who was so arrogant to do this, and with an oath he took it upon himself to do for her whatever she wished. 8(6)So Esther was emboldened and said, "Haman, your Friend, is this liar, this evil man!"

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the king said, "So then, you even violate my wife in my own house?" When Haman heard this, he covered his face[a]. 9Then Bougathan, one of the eunuchs attending the king, said, "Look! Haman has even prepared a pole for Mardochaios, who spoke up on behalf of the king, and a pole fifty cubits tall has been erected at Haman's." And the king said, "Let him be crucified upon it." 10So they hanged Haman on the pole that had been prepared for Mardochaios. Then the king got over his anger.

8 On that very day King Artaxerxes granted to Esther all that belonged to Haman the slanderer, and Mardochaios was summoned by the king, for Esther had revealed that he was related to her. 2Then the king took the signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mardochaios. So Esther appointed Mardochaios over everything of Haman's.

3 Then she spoke again to the king, and she fell before his feet and pleaded that he revoke the evil of Haman and what he had done to the Judeans. 4So the king held out the golden rod to Esther, 5and Esther rose and stood before the king. And Esther said, "If it pleases you and if I have found favor, let an order be dispatched to revoke the letters sent by Haman, which were written to destroy the Judeans who are in your kingdom. 6For how can I bear to see the suffering of my people? And how can I bear to be saved amidst the destruction of my lineage?" 7Then the king said to Esther, "If everything belonging to Haman I gave and turned over to you, and him I hanged[b] on the pole, because he plotted to lay hands on the Judeans, what more do you seek? 8You[c] also write in my name as it pleases you[c], and seal it with my ring, for whatever is written as the king commands and sealed with my ring cannot be countermanded."

9 And so the secretaries were summoned in the first month, which is Nisa, on the twenty-third day of the same year, and they wrote to the Judeans what had been commanded to the administrators and rulers of the satrapies from India to Ethiopia, one hundred twenty-seven satrapies country by country, each according to its own language. 10It was written by the king and sealed with his ring, and they sent the orders by couriers, 11how he ordered them to live in accordance with their laws in every city, both to help themselves and to deal with their adversaries and their enemies as they wished, 12on a single day in the whole kingdom of Artaxerxes, on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is Adar.

E What is written below is a copy of the letter: "The Great King Artaxerxes, to the rulers of the lands from India to Ethiopia, the one hundred twenty-seven satrapies, and to those who are loyal to our interests, greetings.

2 "Many people, who are frequently honored

[a]Or *his face changed* [b]Or *hung* [c]Gk = pl

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9(7)The king, becoming angry and filled with rage, jumped up and was pacing around. 10And Haman was terrified and prostrated himself at the feet of Queen Esther as she still reclined on her couch. 11(8)Just then the king returned to the banquet, and when he saw this he said, "A crime against my kingdom is not enough for you? You also molest my wife in my presence? Let Haman be led away, and let him not live!" 12And so he was led away. (9)Then Agathas, one of his servants, said, "Look! A pole is in his courtyard fifty cubits tall, which Haman cut down to hang Mardochaios, the man who spoke good things concerning the king; therefore, lord, order that he himself be hanged[a] upon it."

13 So the king said, "Let him be hung upon it." And the king removed the signet ring from his hand, and his life was sealed with it.

14 And the king said to Esther, "He even planned to hang Mardochaios, who saved me from the hand of the eunuchs? Did he not know that Esther is of his race?" 15So the king called Mardochaios and granted him all that belonged to Haman. 16And he said to him, "What do you want? I will do it for you." And Mardochaios said, "That you revoke Haman's letter." 17So the king entrusted to him the affairs of the kingdom.

18 Then Esther said to the king on the next day, "Allow me to punish my enemies with bloodshed." 19So Queen Esther appealed to the king also against Haman's children, that they too should die with their father. And the king said, "Let it be done." 20So she struck the enemies in great numbers. 21And in Susa the king made an agreement with the queen to kill men, and he said, "Behold, I give them to you to hang." And so it was done.

(E) 22So he wrote the following letter: "The Great King Assyeros, to the rulers of the one hundred and twenty-seven lands from India to Ethiopia and to the satraps who are loyal to our interests, greetings.

23(2) "Many people, who are frequently hon-

[a]Or *hung*

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with the greatest kindness of their benefactors, become the more ambitious 3and not only seek to harm those subject to us, but not being able to deal with prosperity, they even undertake to scheme against their own benefactors. 4They not only abolish gratitude from among people, but also, carried away by the boasts of those who are inexperienced in goodness, they even presume to escape the evil-hating divine justice, who always observes everything. 5Furthermore, many times encouragement has implicated many of those appointed to places of authority, those entrusted to administer the affairs of friends, making them partly responsible for the shedding of innocent blood, and has brought about irremediable calamities 6by the malicious lie of an evil disposition of people who misconstrue the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

7 "And it is possible to see this not so much from the more ancient records as we handed them down, as it is right at your feet, when you examine things impiously perpetrated by the pestilent behavior of those who hold power unworthily. 8And it is possible to look out hereafter in order that we may render the kingdom quiet for all people, with peace, 9utilizing changes and always discerning what comes to our attention with a rather considerate response. 10For whereas Haman son of Hamadathos (a Macedonian who was in truth [a]a foreigner to the blood of the Persians[a] and quite devoid of our kindness), when he was entertained by us as our guest, 11obtained the goodwill that we have for every nation to such an extent that he was publicly proclaimed our Father and was continually done obeisance to by all as the person second to the royal throne, 12but being unable to restrain his arrogance, he made it his business to deprive us of our rule and our breath 13and by the crafty deceit of ruses asked to destroy Mardochaios, our savior and constant benefactor, and Esther, the innocent companion of our kingdom, together with their whole nation. 14For when by these methods he had caught us undefended he thought that he would transfer the power of the Persians to the Macedonians.

15 "But we find that the Judeans, who were consigned to annihilation by this thrice-accursed man, are not criminals but are governed by most righteous laws 16and are children of the most high, most great, living God, who has directed the kingdom for us and for our ancestors in the most excellent order.

17 "You will therefore do well not to carry out the letters sent by Haman son of Hamadathos, 18because he who did these things has been crucified at the gates of Susa with his whole household, since the God who prevails over all things has recompensed him quickly with the deserved judgment.

19 "And [b]you will do well[b] to post a copy of this letter publicly in every place and to allow the

[a]Or *not of Persian descent* [b]Lacking in Gk

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ored with the greatest kindness of their benefactors, after becoming the more ambitious, (3)not only seek to harm those subject to us, but not being able to deal with prosperity, they even undertake to scheme evil against their own benefactors. (4)They not only take away gratitude from among people, but gone astray due to the boasts of those who are inexperienced in goodness, they even imagine they will escape the evil-hating justice of the just Judge who rules all things. (5)Many times, after having been appointed to places of authority to administer the affairs of trusting friends, having made them partly liable for the shedding of innocent blood, they brought about irremediable calamities (6)by the lie of trickery, when they misconstrue the sincere goodwill of their sovereigns.

24(7) "And it is possible to see this from the records that have been handed down to us, and to the extent that we duly see what lies at our feet due to the savagery of those that hold power, (8)it is possible to look out in the future and to render the kingdom quiet for all nations with peace, (9)since we do not utilize slanders but manage the matters that come to our attention with consideration. 25(10)For as our guest, Haman son of Hamadathos, the Bougean (who was in truth a stranger to the thinking of the Persians and quite devoid of our kindness), (11)obtained so fully the goodwill from us for every nation to such an extent that he was publicly proclaimed our Father and was continually done obeisance to by all as the second person to the royal thrones. 26(12)But, unable to restrain his arrogance, he undertook to divest us of our rule and our breath (13)and by crafty ruses finagled to destroy Mardochaios, our constant savior, and Esther, his innocent partner, together with their whole nation. (14)For when by these methods he had caught us undefended he thought that he would bring about an alienation of the rule of the Persians to the Macedonians.

27(15) "Therefore, we find that the Judeans, who were consigned to you by this thrice-accursed man, are not criminals but are governed by most righteous laws (16)and are even children of the only and true God, who has directed the kingdom for us until now in the most excellent order.

28(17) "Therefore, do well not to pay attention to the letters previously sent to you by Haman, (18)because he himself who did such things has been crucified at the gates of Susa, since the Judge who always sees all things has recompensed him with the deserved penalty.

29(19) "So let a copy of this letter be posted in every place, so the Judeans might both live by their

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Judeans to live in accordance with their own precepts 20and to join in helping them in order that they might defend themselves against those who attack in the time of oppression, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, on that same day. 21For God, who rules over all things, has made this day to be a joy for his chosen race instead of a day of destruction for them.

22 "Therefore, you also shall celebrate this with all good cheer as a holiday among your commemorative feasts 23so that both now and hereafter it may be deliverance for us and for the well-disposed Persians, but for those who plot against us, a memorial of destruction.

24 "Every city and country, without exception, that does not do according to this by spear and fire shall be consumed with wrath. It shall be made not only impassable for people, but also most hostile to wild animals and birds for all time.

8 13"Now, let the copies be posted conspicuously in all the kingdom so that all the Judeans be ready on this day to fight against their adversaries."

14 So the horsemen went out in a hurry to perform what the king had commanded, and the ordinance was posted also in Susa. 15Then Mardochaios went out, wearing the royal robe, with a gold crown and a diadem of purple linen, and when the people in Susa saw him they rejoiced. 16For the Judeans there was light and gladness; 17in every city and country wherever the ordinance was posted, wherever the proclamation was made, there was gladness and joy among the Judeans, a feast and mirth. And many of the nations were circumcised and became Judeans out of fear of the Judeans.

9 Now in the twelfth month, on the thirteenth day of the month that is Adar, the letter written by the king arrived. 2On that same day the opponents of the Judeans perished, for no one resisted, because they feared them. 3For the rulers of the satraps and the tyrants and the royal secretaries esteemed the Judeans, for the fear of Mardochaios weighed upon them. 4For it turned out that the king's ordinance was referred to by name throughout all the kingdom. 6And in the city of Susa the Judeans killed five hundred men, 7including Pharsannestain, Delphon, Phasga 8and Phardatha and Barea and Sarbacha 9and Marmasim and Arouphaios and Arsaios and Zabouthaios, 10the ten sons of Haman son of Hamadathos, a Bougean, the enemy of the Judeans, and they plundered 11on that same day. The number of those killed in Susa was reported to the king. 12The king said to Esther, "The Judeans have killed in the city of Susa five hundred men. In the surrounding countryside how do you suppose they have fared? Therefore, what more do you ask? It shall be

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own laws (20)and strengthen them in order that they might defend themselves against those who attack in a time of oppression. 30And it has been decided by the Judeans throughout the kingdom to observe the fourteenth day of the month, which is Adar, and to hold a feast on the fifteenth, (21)because on those days the Almighty has made for them deliverance and rejoicing.

31(23) "And now hereafter they[a] rightly spell deliverance for the Persians but a memorial of destruction for those who plotted against them.

32(24) "Every city and country that does not do according to this by spear and fire shall be consumed with wrath. And it shall be stretched out not only impassable for people but also for wild animals and birds."

(8) 33(14)And a public notice containing these things was posted also in Susa. And the king authorized Mardochaios to write whatever he wished. 34So Mardochaios sent out letters and sealed them with the king's signet ring, saying that his people should each remain in their own land and celebrate a feast to God. 35And the letter which Mardochaios sent contained these things:

36 "Haman sent to you letters containing thus, 'Hasten quickly to send the disobedient nation of the Judeans to me for destruction.' 37But I, Mardochaios, inform you that the one who did this has been hung at the gates of Susa, and his household has been despatched. 38For this one wished to kill us on the thirteenth of the month that is Adar.' "

39(15) Then Mardochaios went out wearing the royal clothing and a diadem of purple linen, 40and when the people in Susa saw him they rejoiced. (16)For the Judeans there was light, drinking, feasting. 41(17)And many of the Judeans were circumcised, and no one rose up against them. For they feared them.

(9) 42(3)Now the rulers and the tyrants and the satraps and the royal secretaries esteemed the Judeans; for the fear of Mardochaios weighed upon them. 43(4)And in Susa it turned out that Haman was referred to by name and so were the opponents throughout the whole kingdom. 44(6)In Susa the Judeans killed seven hundred men (7)as well as Pharsan and his brother and Pharna (8)and Gagaphardatha (9)and Marmasaima and Izathouth (10)and the ten sons of Haman son of Hamadathos, the Bougean, the enemy of the Judeans, and they plundered all they owned. 45(12)And the king said to Esther, "How have your people here and in the surrounding countryside fared?" 46(13)And Esther said, "Let it be granted to the Judeans to destroy and plunder whomever

[a]I.e. the 14th and 15th of Adar

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yours." 13And so Esther said to the king, "Let it be granted to the Judeans to do likewise tomorrow so that they may hang the ten sons of Haman." 14So he thus permitted it to be done and handed over to the Judeans of the city the bodies of Haman's sons to hang. 15The Judeans in Susa gathered also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar, and they killed three hundred men, but they did not plunder.

16 Now the rest of the Judeans who were in the kingdom also gathered and defended themselves and gained relief from their adversaries. For they killed fifteen thousand of them on the thirteenth of Adar, but they plundered nothing. 17And they rested on the fourteenth of the same month and celebrated it as a day of rest with joy and gladness. 18But the Judeans in the city of Susa gathered together also on the fourteenth and did not rest. They celebrated also the fifteenth with joy and gladness. 19Therefore for this reason, the Judeans who are scattered in every land outside celebrate the fourteenth day of Adar as a holiday with gladness, each sending portions[a] to those nearby. But those living in the large cities also celebrate the fifteenth of Adar as a joyful holiday, sending portions[a] to those nearby.

20 Now Mardochaios recorded these things in a book and sent it to the Judeans—as many as were in the kingdom of Artaxerxes, to those near and far, 21to keep these days, the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar—22for on these days the Judeans gained relief from their enemies—and the whole month, which was Adar, in which matters had been turned for them from sorrow into joy and from mourning into a holiday, to celebrate it as days of feasting and gladness, sending portions[a] to their friends and to the poor.

23 So the Judeans accepted just what Mardochaios had written to them—24how Haman son of Hamadathos, the Macedonian, had warred against them, inasmuch as he had proclaimed a decision and had cast the lot to destroy them, 25and how he went in to the king, telling him to hang Mardochaios, but as much evil as he had devised to bring upon the Judeans came upon him, and he himself and his children were hanged[b]. 26Because of this, these days are called Phrourai, because of the lots (because in their language they are called Phrourai), because of the words of this letter, and as much as they had suffered because of these things, and as much as had happened to them. 27He established them, and the Judeans accepted them for themselves and their descendants and all who had joined them and surely not to do otherwise. And these days are a memorial, kept from generation to generation, by city, family and country. 28These days of Phrourai shall be celebrated for all time, and the commemoration of them shall never cease among their generations.

[a]Or *gifts of food* [b]Or *hung*

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they want." And he agreed. (16)And they killed seventy thousand one hundred men.

47(20) So Mardochaios recorded these things in a book and sent it to the Judeans who were in the kingdom of Assyeros—both far and near—(21)to keep these days for hymns and rejoicing in the place of pain and grief, the fourteenth and fifteenth. 48(22)And he sent portions[a] to the poor, (27)and they welcomed them. 49(26)Because of this these days are called Phouraia, because of the lots that fell on these days as a memorial.

[a]Or *gifts of food*

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29 Then Esther the queen daughter of Aminadab, along with Mardochaios, the Judean, wrote what they had done, and the confirmation of the letter about Phrourai. 30And Mardochaios and Esther the queen established these things for themselves on their own initiative, then also having established them by their own well-being and counsel[a]. 31And Esther established the matter by ordinance forever, and it was written for a memorial.

10 The king recorded during his rule over both land and sea 2both his strength and bravery, both the wealth and the glory of his kingdom; note that they have been recorded in the book of the kings of the Persians and the Medes as a memorial. 3And Mardochaios [b]took over from[b] King Artaxerxes, and he was great in the kingdom and extolled by the Judeans. And being loved, he spent his life for his whole nation.

F And Mardochaios said, "From God these things have come. 2For I remember about the dream that I saw concerning these matters, for not even a word of them has failed to be fulfilled. 3There was the little spring that became a river, and there was light and sun and abundant water; Esther is the river, whom the king married and made queen. 4The two dragons are I myself and Haman. 5The nations are those that gathered to destroy the name of the Judeans. 6And my nation, this is Israel, who cried out to God and were saved. The Lord has saved his people, and the Lord has rescued us from all these evils, and God has done signs and great wonders that have not happened among the nations. 7For this purpose he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for all the nations, 8and these two lots came to the hour and the right time and to the day of decision before God, and for all the nations. 9And God remembered his people and vindicated[c] his own inheritance.

10 "And these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of that same month, will be observed by them with a gathering and joy and rejoicing before God, from generation to generation forever among his people Israel."

11 In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and a Leuite, and Ptolemy his son brought the above letter about Phrourai, which they said existed[d], and Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, one of those in Ierousalem, translated it.

[a]Gk uncertain [b]Possibly *succeeded* [c]Or *made righteous* [d]Possibly *was authentic*

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(10) 50(1)The king recorded the dues of land and sea (2)and his strength, both the riches and the glory of his kingdom. 51And Mardochaios extolled him and wrote in the books of the Persians and Medes as a memorial. 52(3)And Mardochaios [a]took over from[a] King Assyeros, and he was great in the kingdom and loved by all the Judeans. He led them and bestowed glory on his whole nation.

(F) 53And Mardochaios said, "From God these things have come. 54(2)For he remembered the dream that he saw." And it was fulfilled, and he said, (3)"The little spring is Esther, (4)and the two dragons are I myself and Haman. (5)The river is the nations that gathered together to destroy the Judeans. The sun and light are the revelation of God that appeared to the Judeans; this is the judgment. 55(6)And God has done these signs and wonders, which have not happened among the nations. (7)And he made two lots, one for the people of God and one for the nations 56(8)and these two lots approached the hours at the right time and day of the lordship of the everlasting one among all the nations. 57(9)And God remembered his people and vindicated[b] his inheritance. 58And all the people cried out in a loud voice and said 'Blessed are you, Lord, who remembers the covenants made with our fathers! Amen!'

59(10) "And these days in the month of Adar, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of that same month, will be observed by them with a gathering and joy and gladness before God, from generation to generation forever among his people Israel."

[a]Possibly *succeeded* [b]Or *made righteous*

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